OSTRANDER, SNYDER & MARCUS

SUICIDE SQUAD

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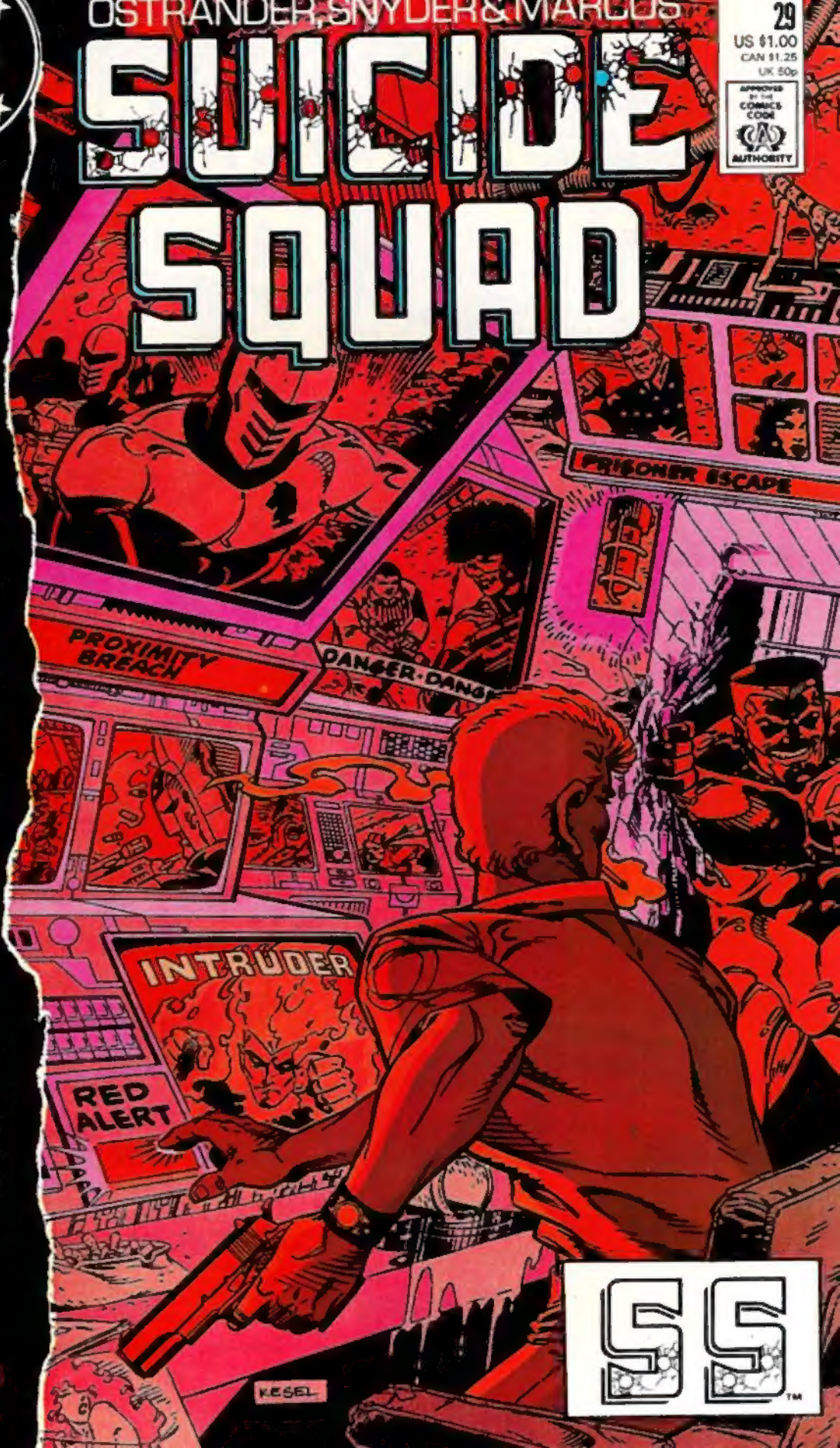
Part 8 of 11



"HEAVY SQUAD"

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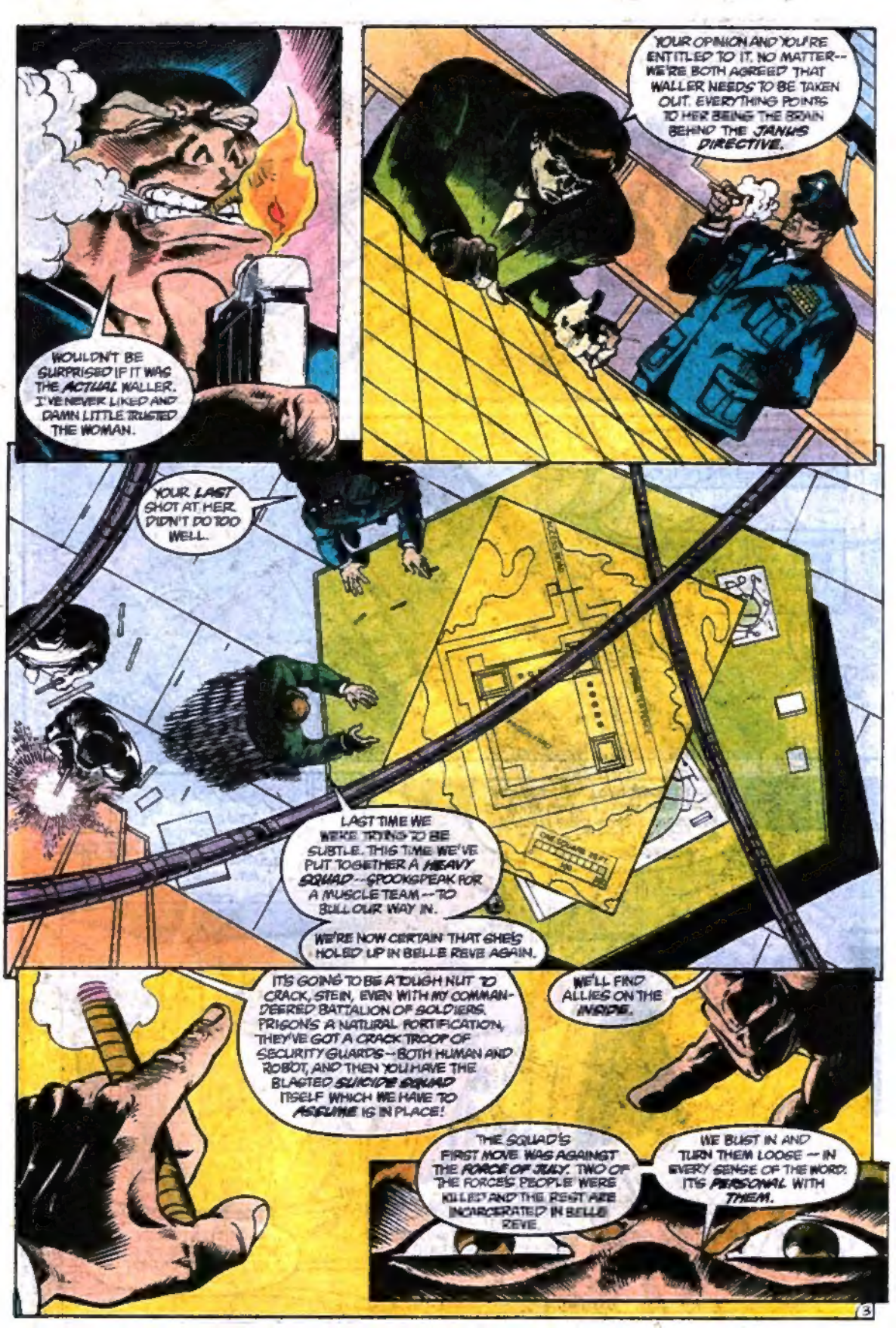
AN ABANDONED NORAD BASE IN THE APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS, TEMPORARY HQ TO CHECKMATE.
THANKS FOR THE LOAN OF THE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, COLONEL.
NO PROBLEM, SO LONG AS WE'RE ALLIES.
AND ONLY SO LONG AS WE'RE ALLIES.
WE FINALLY MANAGED TO GET THROUGH TO OUR KNIGHTS IN THE FIELD AND PULL THEM BACK.
AT LEAST, WE GOT THROUGH TO SOME OF THEM BEFORE THEY GOT KILLED.
ONE WHO SURVIVED THE ATTACK--JOHN REED--DESCRIBED THE ATTACKERS AS NINJA TYPE ASSASSINS. LORD KNOWS WHOSE SIDE THEY'RE ON IN THIS JANUS DIRECTIVE MESS.
SEEMS THE ASSASSINS HOMED IN ON THE KNIGHTS VIA THE FREQUENCY OF THEIR COMMUNICATORS--GADGETS LIKE THESE. WE'VE CHANGED THE FREQUENCY NOW, OF COURSE.
WHAT I WANT TO KNOW IS HOW THEY GOT IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?
WALLER. HAS TO BE.
OR THE DOPPELGÄNGER THAT WE NOW FIGURE IS IMPERSONATING WALLER.
2


WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF IT WAS THE ACTUAL WALLER. I'VE NEVER LIKED AND DAMN LITTLE TRUSTED THE WOMAN.
YOUR OPINION AND YOU'RE ENTITLED TO IT. NO MATTER-- WE'RE BOTH AGREED THAT WALLER NEEDS TO BE TAKEN OUT. EVERYTHING POINTS TO HER BEING THE BRAIN BEHIND THE JANUS DIRECTIVE.
YOUR LAST SHOT AT HER DIDN'T DO TOO WELL.
LAST TIME WE WERE TRYING TO BE SUBTLE. THIS TIME WE'VE PUT TOGETHER A HEAVY SQUAD--SPOOKSPEAK FOR A MUSCLE TEAM--TO BULL OUR WAY IN.
WE'RE NOW CERTAIN THAT SHE'S HOLED UP IN BELLE REVE AGAIN.
IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK, STEIN, EVEN WITH MY COMMANDEERED BATTALION OF SOLDIERS. PRISON'S A NATURAL FORTIFICATION, THEY'VE GOT A CRACK TROOP OF SECURITY GUARDS--BOTH HUMAN AND ROBOT, AND THEN YOU HAVE THE BLASTED SUICIDE SQUAD ITSELF WHICH WE HAVE TO ASSUME IS IN PLACE!
WE'LL FIND ALLIES ON THE INSIDE.
THE SQUAD'S FIRST MOVE WAS AGAINST THE FORCE OF JULY. TWO OF THE FORCE'S PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND THE REST ARE INCARCERATED IN BELLE REVE.
WE BUST IN AND TURN THEM LOOSE -- IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD. IT'S PERSONAL WITH THEM.

YOU STILL INTENT ON LEADING YOUR BORROWED TROOPS YOURSELF?

OH YEAH. IF YOU'RE *RIGHT*, WALLER'S RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTEMPT ON *MY* LIFE. IT'S PERSONAL WITH *ME*, TOO.

YOU'RE LEADING *YOUR* MEN, RIGHT?

I HAVEN'T MUCH CHOICE. WE HAVEN'T GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE LEFT. BULLOCK AND I BOTH HAVE TO GO.

AW, NUTS! WALLER BETRAYED YOU AND YOU WANT TO BE THERE WHEN SHE GETS IT."

"MAYBE. LET'S HEAD OUT. WE ATTACK IN *THREE HOURS* AND WE'VE GOT A LONG TRIP TO THE FRONT LINES."

I WAS *THERE*, MR. KALE. I *KNOW* WHAT I SAW. WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS *WHY* MEMBERS OF *YOUR* SUICIDE SQUAD WERE ATTACKING KONING INDUSTRIES.

ATTACKING OR *DEFENDING* IT, MS. LANE? IN ANY CASE, THE MATTER IS ONE OF NATIONAL SECURITY. I'M NOT REALLY ALLOWED TO DISCUSS IT.

YOU MIGHT *HAVE TO* AFTER I'VE TURNED UP THE JOURNALISTIC *HEAT*, MR. KALE.

PERSISTENT WITCH, AIN'T SHE? MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST HAVE DEADSHOT SHOOT HER.

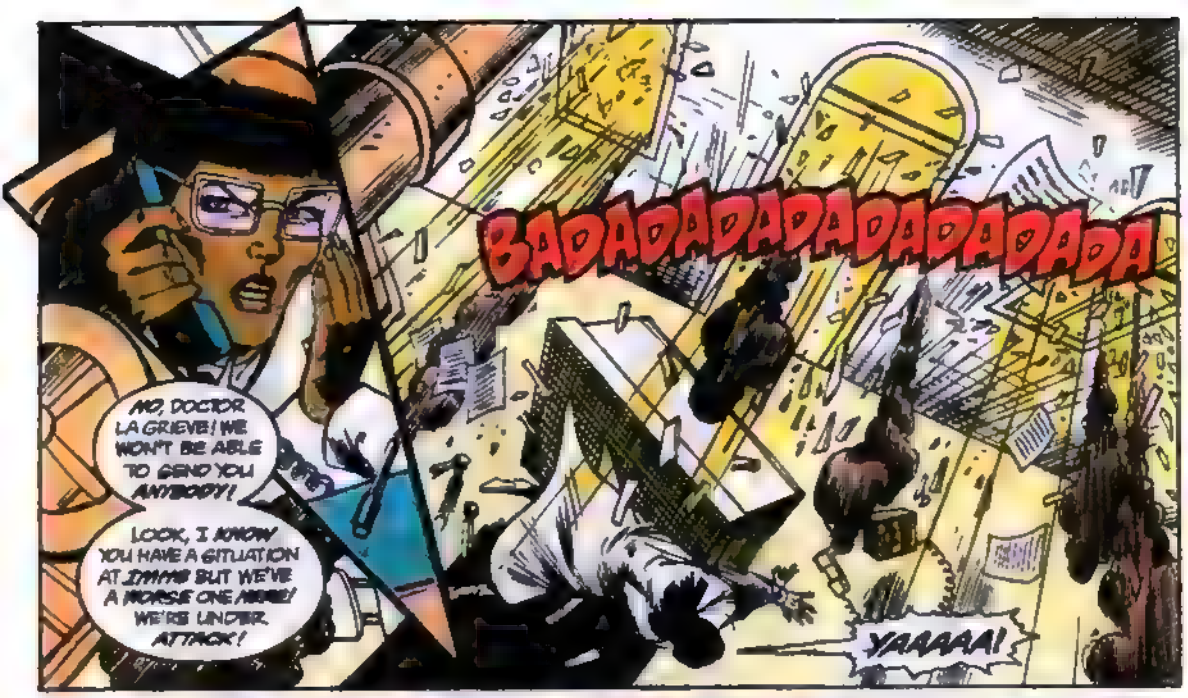
UHH... DEADSHOT'S IN ARKHAM, AMANDA, REMEMBER? YOU PUT HIM THERE.
I KNOW THAT, FOOL! WHAT I'M SAYING IS MAYBE WE SHOULD GET HIM OUT AND HAVE HIM SHOOT MS. SNOOP OF '89!
MURPH!
ANY SIGN OUT THERE?
NAW. IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS. YOU REALLY THINK THESE BOZOS ARE STILL COMING?
YEAH, I'M SURE. I CAN FEEL IT IN MY BONES.
6

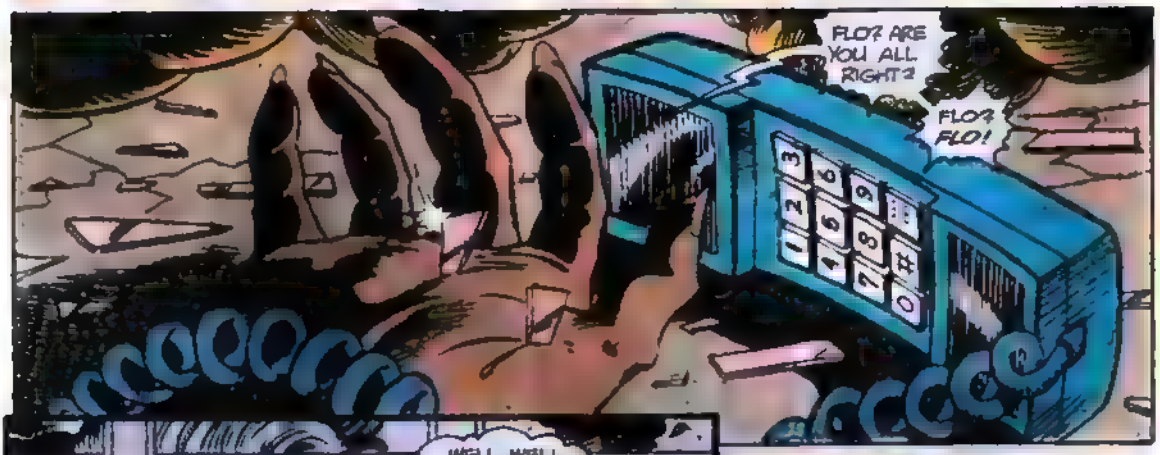
BADOOM!
SWOOSH
SWOOSH
FWADOOM!
OKAY, I GOT THE DOORS OPEN! BUT I THINK THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE!
MOVE IT OUT!
"I THINK THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE." IS THAT FRUITCAKE JOKING?
CHAAAAAARGE!
YAAAAH!

WE'RE GOING IN! CLEAR OFF THE MOMENT WE'RE AWAY!
KNIGHT TO BISHOP! YOU CAN LAUNCH! WE'LL CLEAR THE BOARD!
ALL STATIONS! GENERAL ALERT!
GET A HOLD OF YEAGER! WHERE THE BLAZES IS SHEBA?!?
ALL KNIGHTS! ALL PAWNS! THIS IS ROOK CONTROL! ALL LAUNCH! EVERYBODY INTO THE POOL!
HUH. I'D FEEL A LOT BETTER IF THE WALL LOOKED LIKE ESTHER WILLIAMS.
WOOSH!
SHUUUUU!
BROAAAR!
VRUMM

WE GOT THE WELCOME WAGON.
SAVE THE TALK. LET'S DO THE JOB.
KRAK!
VIDIDIDIDI
WHAM!
BWA-DOOM!
VIT! VIT!
WE SPLIT NOW. YOU KNOW YOUR OBJECTIVE.
OH YEAH.
I'VE GOT A DATE WITH A FAT LADY AND I'M GONNA MAKE HER SING!
8

ALWAYS DID WANT TO BUST ME UP A PRISON!
WHA-ROOM!
GET TO TOTAL A FACTORY AND A PRISON, ALL IN THE SAME WEEK! SOMEBODY UP THERE MUST LIKE ME! HA HA HA HA HA!
KRAK!
EVERY FIBER IN MY BEING SCREAMS TO DESTROY MAJOR FORCE! HE'S MY ENEMY!
BUT NO. WARTIME BREEDS STRANGE ALLIANCES, BUT-- I'M TOLD-- NECESSARY ONES.
ALL ALLIANCES ARE MADE IN HELL.
FADADADADADADADADADA


BADADADADADADADADA
NO, DOCTOR LA GRIEVE! WE WON'T BE ABLE TO SEND YOU ANYBODY!
LOOK, I KNOW YOU HAVE A SITUATION AT JIMMY'S BUT WE'VE A WORSE ONE HERE! WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
YAAAAA!


FLO? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
FLO? FLO!

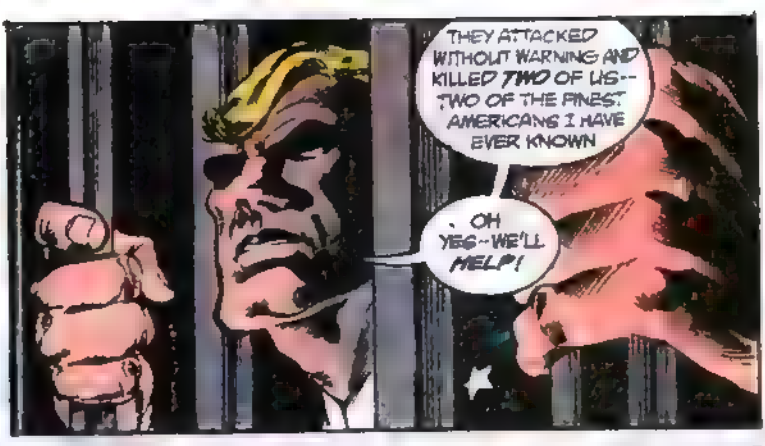
WELL, WELL.. LOOKS LIKE THE ATTACK ON KONING HAS COME HOME TO ROOST.
MS. LANE! STOP! I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY OUT THERE!
YOU CAN'T GUARANTEE IT IN HERE AND THE STORY IS OUT THERE!

RAHHHHHKRRR!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA! ZING! PAKOW! KAZINNNG!
ALL RIGHT, YOU PITIFUL MORONS! IF IT'S WAR YOU WANT, IT'S WAR YOU'LL GET!
TAG, YOU'RE DEAD

SHWUP SHWUP
BRUM BRUM BRUM BRUM
WEEEUUUM
WHERE THE HELL DID HE COME FROM?!?
C'MON, BABY! TURN IT AROUND! LET'S GET IN OUR LICKS!
SHEBA DOWN AND SMOOTH, SLIDE. POP TUBES
POOMPOOM POOM
SHWUP SHWUP
FRUMMM FRUMMM
12

BRADOOM!
OKAY, YOU TIN MAN! IS THAT HOW YOU WANT TO PLAY IT?!?
SHEBA! EMERGENCY EVASIVE! PEEL! PEEL!
KRASHH
YAAAARRRGH!
NOW, SCUM! I'M GOING TO RIP YOUR THROAT OUT!
:LEEK! SH SHEBA!! TOUCHDOWN! GURK! SHUTDOWN! EMERGENCY PROCEDURE! - GAK!!

HERE'S THE DEAL--WE BUST YOU OUT AND YOU HELP US BREAK THE SUICIDE SQUAD'S BACK INTERESTED?

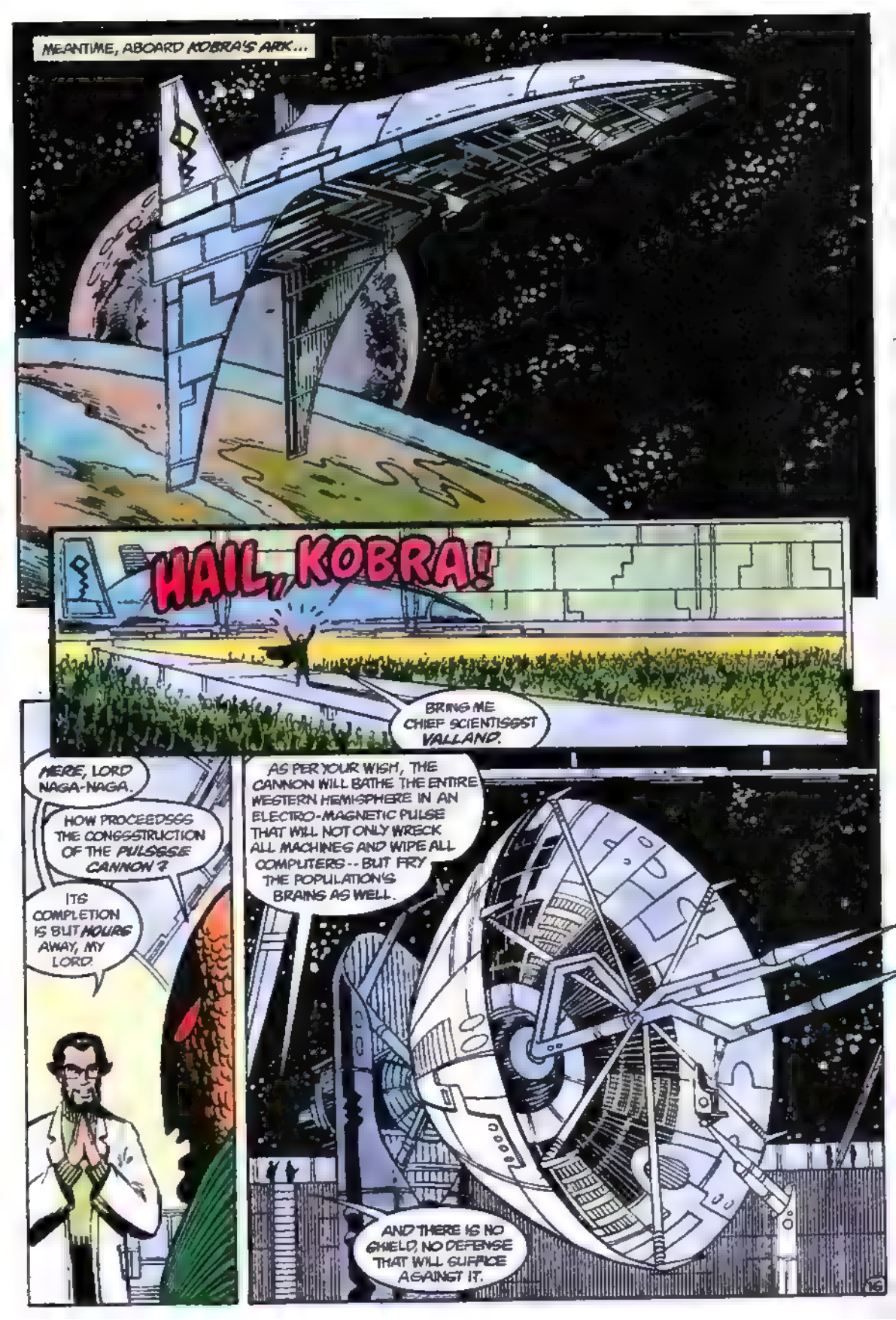

THEY ATTACKED WITHOUT WARNING AND KILLED TWO OF US--TWO OF THE FINEST AMERICANS I HAVE EVER KNOWN
OH YES--WE'LL HELP!

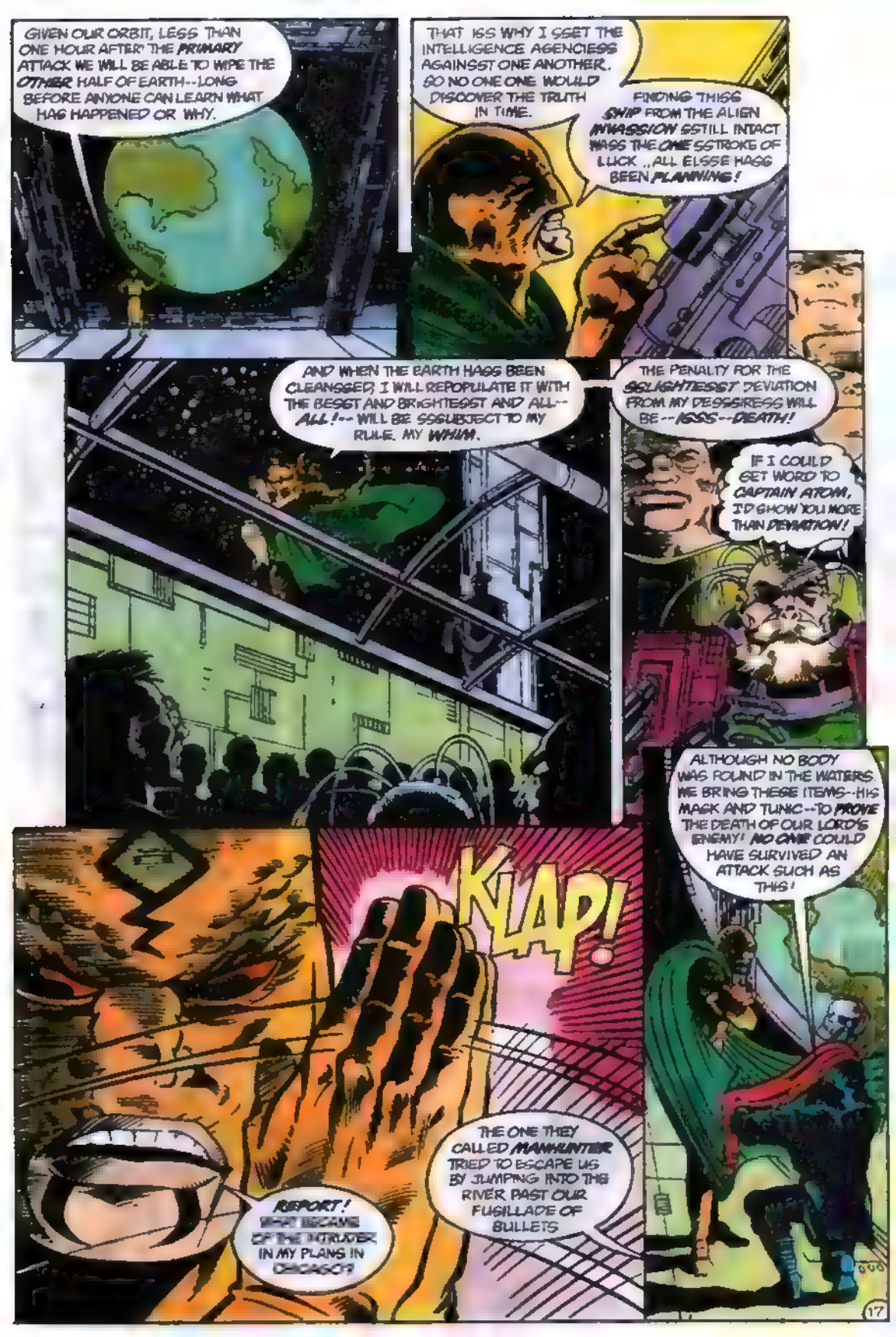
GET TO THE BACK OF YOUR CELLS AND COVER YOUR FACES

BOOOM

ALL THAT TROUBLE AND NOW WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIND SOME NEW CELLS
YOU!!!

NO.
US
ANY OF YOU FEELING REASONABLE ABOUT THIS? I HOPE NOT– BECAUSE I SURE DON'T!


MEANTIME, ABOARD KOBRA'S ARK...
HAIL, KOBRA!
BRING ME CHIEF SCIENTISSST VALLAND.
HERE, LORD NAGA-NAGA.
HOW PROCEEDSSS THE CONSSSTRUCTION OF THE PULSSSE CANNON?
ITS COMPLETION IS BUT HOURS AWAY, MY LORD.
AS PER YOUR WISH, THE CANNON WILL BATHE THE ENTIRE WESTERN HEMISPHERE IN AN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC PULSE THAT WILL NOT ONLY WRECK ALL MACHINES AND WIPE ALL COMPUTERS -- BUT FRY THE POPULATION'S BRAINS AS WELL.
AND THERE IS NO SHIELD, NO DEFENSE THAT WILL SUFFICE AGAINST IT.


GIVEN OUR ORBIT, LESS THAN ONE HOUR AFTER THE PRIMARY ATTACK WE WILL BE ABLE TO WIPE THE OTHER HALF OF EARTH--LONG BEFORE ANYONE CAN LEARN WHAT HAS HAPPENED OR WHY.
THAT ISS WHY I SSET THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIESS AGAINSST ONE ANOTHER. SO NO ONE ONE WOULD DISCOVER THE TRUTH IN TIME.
FINDING THISS SWIP FROM THE ALIEN INVASSION SSTILL INTACT WASS THE ONE SSTROKE OF LUCK ,, ALL ELSSE HASS BEEN PLANNING!
AND WHEN THE EARTH HASS BEEN CLEANSSED, I WILL REPOPULATE IT WITH THE BESST AND BRIGHTESST AND ALL-- ALL!-- WILL BE SSUBJECT TO MY RULE. MY WHIM.
THE PENALTY FOR THE SSLIGHTESST DEVIATION FROM MY DESSIRESS WILL BE --ISSS--DEATH!
IF I COULD SET WORD TO CAPTAIN ATOM, I'D SHOW YOU MORE THAN DEVIATION!
ALTHOUGH NO BODY WAS FOUND IN THE WATERS, WE BRING THESE ITEMS--HIS MASK AND TUNIC--TO PROVE THE DEATH OF OUR LORD'S ENEMY! NO ONE COULD HAVE SURVIVED AN ATTACK SUCH AS THIS!
KLAP!
REPORT! WHAT BECAME OF THE INTRUDER IN MY PLANS IN CHICAGO?
THE ONE THEY CALLED MANHUNTER TRIED TO ESCAPE US BY JUMPING INTO THE RIVER PAST OUR FUSILLADE OF BULLETS

I AM NOT SSATISSFIED, BUT IT MUST SSUFFICE FOR NOW!
IT BETTER DO, PAL-- BECAUSE THAT'S ALL YOU'RE GOING TO GET!
THE ONLY REASON I ESCAPED WAS THE POOR SCHMUCK I FOUGHT ON THE ELEVATED TRAIN FELL ON THE THIRD RAIL. I HAD JUST ENOUGH TIME TO SWITCH CLOTHES WITH HIM
HIS BODY IN MY COSTUME MADE A GOOD SHOOTING TARGET FOR THE OTHER CLOWNS AND THEN--DRESSED AS A BLACKADDER--I JUMPED INTO THE RIVER TO "SEARCH" FOR MY BODY.
DAMN WALLER ANYWAY! THIS IS ALL HER FAULT!
SHE SET ME UP! NEEDED HELP-- SHE SAID. NO ONE COULD DO IT BUT YOU, MARK-- BLAH BLAH BLAH. PROMISED ME BACK-UP IF I KEPT A FREQUENCY ON THE BATON OPEN. NOW LOOK AT ME!
NOW ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FREE THE CAPTIVES, BLOW UP THE WEAPON, SAVE THE EARTH, AND FIND A WAY HOME.
WHATEVER PRICE I'M CHARGING WALLER, IT'S TOO LITTLE!

HEEEERE, TUBBY, TUBBY, TUBBY...
CLIK
"TUBBY TUBBY TUBBY" MY BUTT!
BRAAAAA!
VIT VIT VIT

HA HA HA HA! G'WAN! POP ME SOME WITH THOSE POP GUNS! I'LL FINISH TRASHING THIS PLACE AND THEN I'LL TRASH YOU GUYS!
WHA--?!
SPAKOW! SPAKOW! SPAKOW!
WHO THE HELL--?!
WANT TO PLAY ROUGH? I'LL GIVE YOU ROUGH!!
GOOSH!
HIS NAME IS FIRESTORM.
SPAK
KOW!!

C'MON, WORMS! CAN'T YOU DO BETTER THAN THIS?!?
PITIFUL!
WHO IS THIS BROAD-- WONDER WOMAN'S BIGGER SISTER?

STOP FIGHTING YOU'VE ALL BEEN DUPED.

ONE HASTILY ARRANGED TRUCE LATER...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE OF THE DOPPELGÄNGERS!

I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE. BUT I DROPPED THE DOPPLER WHO CAME FOR ME AND EXTRACTED ENOUGH INFORMATION SO I KNEW WHAT THE BASIC SKINNY WAS.*

YOU KNEW THE TRUTH--AND YOU LAUNCHED THE ATTACKS ON ME ANY-WAY?!?

AND LIG!

* WAY BACK IN SQUAD #26. --BOB

WHAT CHOICE DID I HAVE? HAD TO PLAY THE CHARADE--IF I DIDN'T FULFILL THE ORDERS GIVEN TO ME THEY'D KNOW I WAS THE REAL ARTICLE!

I HAD TO BUY TIME! I KNEW FARADAY AND STEEL'S GROUP OVER AT THE CBI WEREN'T INVOLVED--KOBRA THOUGHT THEY WERE UNIMPORTANT. I NEEDED TIME FOR THEM TO DIG FOR ME, LEARN WHAT I NEEDED TO KNOW!

AND PEOPLE DIED TO BUY YOU TIME. GOOD PEOPLE!

THAT'S RIGHT. THEY DID. INCLUDING SOME YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT.

BUT THANKS TO JOHN AND CHERIE CHASE WE HAVE SOME IDEA OF WHAT KOBRA'S DOING. AND, THANKS TO MANHUNTER, WE MAY HAVE A FIX ON WHERE HE IS. WE HAVE ALL PAID A PRICE--INCLUDING ME.

IT'S TIME THAT KOBRA GOT HANDED THE BILL.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK IN CHECKMATE! #18 AND CONCLUDED HERE IN TWO WEEKS!

SUICIDE NOTES

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L-3676

Since we've got another unexpected issue this month, now's the perfect time to clean out the mail folder and look at wrap-up comments regarding our successful and popular DEADSHOT mini-series. (And don't forget it when it comes time to fill out your CBG Fan Poll ballot.) For everyone who asked, no, we have no plans for a DEADSHOT monthly and yes, Deadshot is still considered a member of our team and should be seen again; when we cannot say.

John O and Kim Y,

Over the course of the first two issues' events I've felt as though I were marching down a dark, winding, treacherous road with oblivion beckoning as my ultimate destination. But, at the end of last issue, I thought I saw a little bit of light toward the end of the tunnel.

While reading DEADSHOT #3, however, I felt my already precarious pathway crumble beneath me. And the faint glimmer of light from last issue turned out to be nothing more than an illusion.

So now I find myself stuck in this darkness as totally and completely as a fly in amber.

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

*****

Dear Bob,

If issue #3 of DEADSHOT is what #4 is going to be like, I can't wait to see it. #3 was so high-powered and action-packed, #4 is going to have a high standard to live up to. #3 was the best issue of the bunch, so far. The art was beautiful. Luke really does a great job, but then that is why I read SUICIDE SQUAD (having John Ostrander as a writer is another factor). Luke is really able to bring out the emotions and gestures of just about anybody I know. That is why I like his work so much. A good example is the last page of #3. The anger on Floyd's face is so clearly shown, I can almost feel his anger toward his mother myself. His shadowy work is also very well done. Even that can be more expressive than just regular light can. (I'm now speaking as an official, because that is what we are doing in my college art course, now.) All in all, the issue was very well done artwise.

John's work, as well, was excellent. The scripts just seem to be getting better issue by issue. Too bad this is only a four-issue mini-series. I just know that John is going to provide us (readers) with a bang-up job on the script next month. I liked the part with the sheriff coming on to Marnie. I was sorry to see Floyd's son died. This is going to be another notch in Floyd's mental instability.

Galen S. West
605 C Perdew
Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Your letter is much appreciated but you neglected to acknowledge the co-writing talents of Kim Yale, who helped bring about a lot of the dark edginess you seem to have liked so much. Credit where credit is due, after all.

*****

Dear John, Kim, Luke, and Bob,

Will you *please* stop making a bloody fool out of me? After I read DEADSHOT #3, I suggested that the kid wasn't really dead and that the gardener was probably mostly responsible for everything. Foiled again.

Seriously, what you accomplished in the complete DEADSHOT mini-series was a comic book first. The Comics Code says that there has to be at least a partial happy ending for every story. But DEADSHOT was the first comic I can remember where literally *nobody* lives happily ever after. All the bad guys are dead—but so is the kidnapped kid; the one person you expect to live because the kid *always* lives when the star of the book is so determined to perform a rescue. Marnie sticks up for Floyd way past the sensible point and becomes an accomplice to his crimes in the worst way; also destroying what he was feeling in the pit of his stomach, perhaps never understanding why she stuck her neck out so far for Floyd. Deadshot himself, after reliving every painful ghost of his past, comes out of the experience worse, not better.

You've propelled Lawton into new territory—before he was a cold-blooded killer, but a reasonably stable one who was in it for the bucks. Now he's pretty close to being an out-and-out Arkham psychotic. Nice job, Amanda. You really know how to motivate a guy.

The series was never boring for an instant, and I'm dying for more stuff where Luke McDonnell inks his own pencils. His use of blacks and whites was almost mystical.

By the way, KOBRA was another villain who also had his own book.

Charles D. Brown
39 Stockton Street
Brentwood, NY 11717

Luke is pencilling and inking THE PHANTOM these days, the fourth issue of which goes on sale in a mere two weeks. His work, along with Mark Verheiden's scripts, is superlative and is worthy of your attention. It almost makes me want to print that one in black and white.

Funny you should mention (quite rightly) Kobra since he's all over this book currently.

*****

Dear Mr. Greenberger,

Few mini-series are reaching the excellence level. The ones that come to my mind are, you've got it, DARK KNIGHT and THE WATCHMEN. I don't hesitate to place DEADSHOT with these (now) classics. A death-wish villain with an obscure family past is a hell of an opportunity and John and Kim maximized the potential of the character with an outstanding story. All the team has done a great job and this was the best art that Luke has ever done. Despite all that praise, there are still two little things that are annoying me.

First, when they pull out the bullet from the spine of Floyd's mother, the police will probably study it. With ballistics, can't they identify this bullet (and all others that killed the whole gang) coming from the unique Deadshot's wrist-magnums? Well, I was wondering....

Then, there is Wes's portrayal as mentally deficient. Sure, as a pedernst, Wes has psychological problems, but does he have to be also unintelligent and childish? Let me explain my opinion. Sexual abuse of children is really a grave subject. Studies show that one man out of three and one woman out of two were, at least once, sexually abused or aggressed and it happened to most of them while they were still minors. Surprisingly, the abusers are people like you and me and they are coming from every class of society. They can be doctors, criminals, teachers, policemen and so on ... and yes, even some women are sexual abusers. People you

know are maybe abusing their own or others' children. This is a serious problem because society knows how to deal with and reform thieves, murderers, and social misfits, but how do we deal with someone's sexual fixations? Do we have the ability and skill to change them?

Abusers are not all "insane." That's why I think that portraying Wes as a mentally deficient man was an unnecessary and unrealistic stereotype. To my knowledge, it was the first time that sexual abuse of children was presented in a comic book except for a well-meant but boring *Spider-Man/Power Puck* special. On that subject, DEADSHOT was a better story, but not good enough.

I still think, however, that the whole DEADSHOT mini-series is one of the best stories of 1988.

Pascal Lavoie
6420, Somerland Apt. 504
Montreal, Quebec H4V 1S3
Canada

Interesting points, Pascal. In order, we might assume the Sheriff will downplay the ballistics report as a favor to Marnie. Or then again, maybe not, which may open the door for further stories.

The second point is a serious one and worthy of further thought. John and Kim never intended to make Wes totally stupid and mentally deficient. He was just one of the bad guys and a pederast at that, furthering the dark and grim tone of the series. The subject is too important to be given short shrift and if that bothered you, we're sorry, but we'll tackle it again, no doubt, in the future.

*****

Dear Bob,

The DEADSHOT mini-series has turned out to be a fascinating look inside the head of one of the "lesser" DC super-team members. Floyd Lawton is a very ill man, mentally speaking, and although he's managed to take out some of his family frustrations on his relatives and enemies, he's no better because of it. Marnie, too, is if anything, worse. She's stuck with unfulfilled personal feelings, and must be even more unsure of herself, especially after her involvement in covering up his various executions. Sadly, their relationship with each other and with the Squad is no different at the end of the series than it was when it started. But just maybe Marnie's persuaded Floyd to think about his own motivations. I hope these events aren't forgotten in the Squad's own book.

Luke's art got better as the series went on. Chris Romano's appraisal of the varying artistic styles used is most accurate. The last page of the last issue was pure Mazzucchelli! But I think he is developing a style more his own as most of the issue shows, and it's a good one. As others have written, he is the best inker for his own pencils (although Bob Lewis does a good job in SS, as will Karl Kesel, I'm sure), as this is where he expressed mood with the thickness of the lines.

Malcolm Bourne
6 Craigwell Court
Prestwich, Manchester M25 8EF
England

*****

Dear Bob,

The DEADSHOT mini-series has been a generally fine one. Right off the bat, it illustrates part of the strength of the SUICIDE SQUAD concept. Within that title, "marginal" characters can be re-introduced or kept alive in a fashion that would not otherwise be possible, i.e., they can be given some depth and consistency far beyond what would be conceivable if they were limited to occasional guest shots in various other titles. The SUICIDE SQUAD format is also quite convenient for mini-series such as this one. Once it has been demonstrated that a character is interesting enough to support his own storyline (and once that character has had a chance to get some fan recognition and support), his role in SUICIDE SQUAD can easily be adapted so that he can "branch out" on his own, either temporarily or permanently. In this case, it is only a temporary move (for now, at least), but it was still a worthy mini-series.

In fact, one positive aspect of the mini-series was its close cohesion with SUICIDE SQUAD (in spirit, at least). This mini-series is almost a "back-up story" for the ongoing title. Readers who have followed it will come away with an increased appreciation of Deadshot (or, at least, increased understanding) but those who chose not to follow his adventures here will not have had their enjoyment of the main title irreparably harmed. (They will have missed *something*, to be sure, but that is a risk and compromise that is unavoidable if Deadshot is to get a chance on his own.)

This four-issue trip into the past of Deadshot helped illuminate his present quite starkly. He is one character who suits the Suicide Squad perfectly! Self-denying behavior is often hard to comprehend, but this series has managed to give us a measure of understanding of why he is as he is without tying everything up in neat little packages. Like all of us, Deadshot is a complex mixture of reason and unreason (and nonreason), and it is difficult to separate the strands of each, which together weave the whole. This came out very nicely toward the end of #4, when Deadshot raged against his therapist and said "You think that *facts* explain things!" This would seem to be a reaction against the view that knowledge can rule emotion (under the proper circumstances, of course). Things are seldom that simple. Often, the best that can be hoped for is that knowledge (and reason) can help to *modify* emotions and so make for a more integrated whole. But when you're as tormented as Deadshot is, it's pretty difficult to even get started along that line.

I seem to be one of the few who is not knocked off his feet by Luke McDonnell's artwork. In this mini-series, I found it serviceable, but not a whole lot more. It did not detract from the intensity of the story by Kim Yale and John Ostrander, but neither did it add anything much to it. I also found the cover to be rather weak—again, failing to convey the intensity of the mini-series.

I hope to see more of the story of Deadshot's personal life and also to see more mini-series featuring Squad members, when the circumstances warrant it.

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Sorry you didn't like those covers—I thought they were terrific and really conveyed that this was a mini-series to be reckoned with. The coloring might have been darkened to convey the tone better, but Luke's design and execution was top-notch in my mind.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Okay, it's all been a party compared to the next two issues coming up. In just a week, CHECKMATE! #18 kicks off the climax as all the assembled forces gather their wits and weapons and head into space to take on Kobra directly. It's non-stop action that concludes in two weeks in SQUAD #30 (with an aftermath of sorts in CAPTAIN ATOM #30). John Snyder and CHECKMATE!'s Steve Erwin have been conferring by phone, swapping designs and doing whatever is possible to make the two issues as cohesive and intense as possible. This is an ending you won't want to miss since everyone has a piece of the action, from President Bush down to Lois Lane. And the final pieces are put into place ... forever affecting the government and the super-hero community. You have been warned.

Until then, root for those Mets and we'll see you in 14! Keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger